

What Are Kids Drinking?

This *eBulletin* examines the types of alcoholic beverage that are typically consumed by adolescents in Ontario. Data are from the 2005 *Ontario Student Drug Use Survey (OSDUS)*, which is an anonymous in-class survey of 7th- to 12th-graders conducted every two years in Ontario schools.

About two-thirds (62%) of Ontario students in grades 7 to 12 are past year drinkers. Among these students, 54% report that they drink wine, 66% report they drink beer, and 78% drink liquor (such as rum, vodka, whiskey, coolers). The average amount of beer usually consumed at one time is reported to be 3.1 bottles (95% CI: 2.8-3.3). The average amount of wine usually consumed at one time is 1.6 glasses (95% CI: 1.5-1.7), and the average amount of liquor usually consumed is 3.2 drinks (95% CI: 3.0-3.4).

Figure 1 presents the percentage of drinkers who report drinking wine, broken down by sex and grade subgroups. There is no significant difference between male (53%) and female (54%) drinkers regarding wine consumption. Similarly, there is no significant grade variation.

Figure 1. Percentage of Past Year Drinkers Who Consume Wine, by Sex and Grade, OSDUS 2005 (N=2,381)

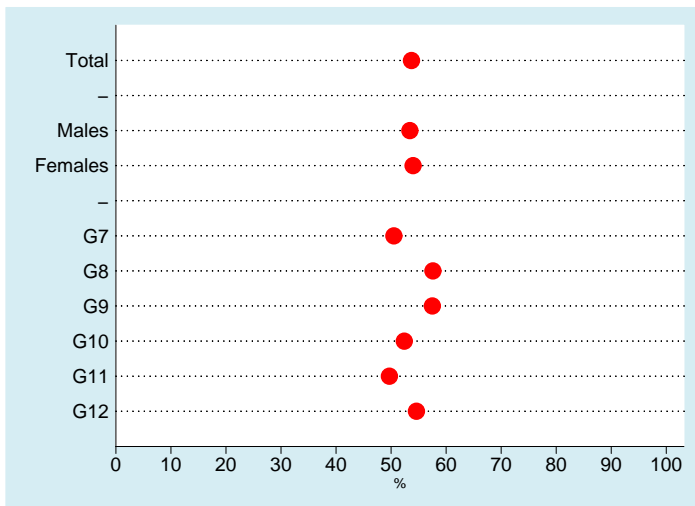


Figure 2. Percentage of Past Year Drinkers Who Consume Beer, by Sex and Grade, OSDUS 2005 (N=2,381)

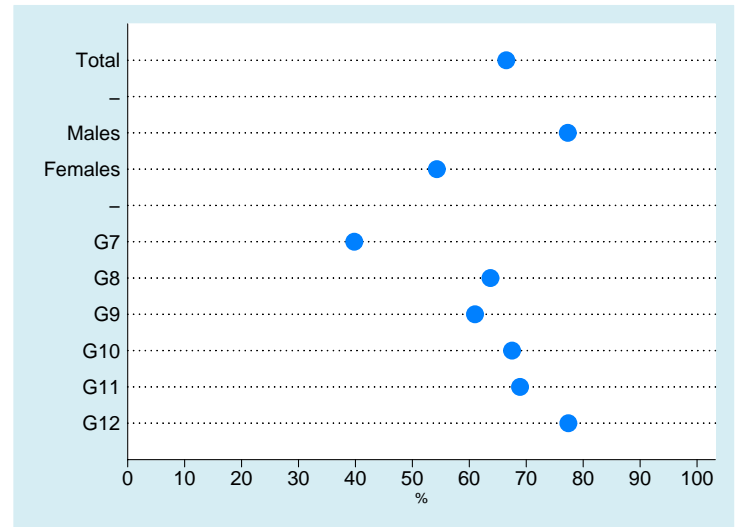


Figure 3. Percentage of Past Year Drinkers Who Consume Liquor, by Sex and Grade, OSDUS 2005 (N=2,381)

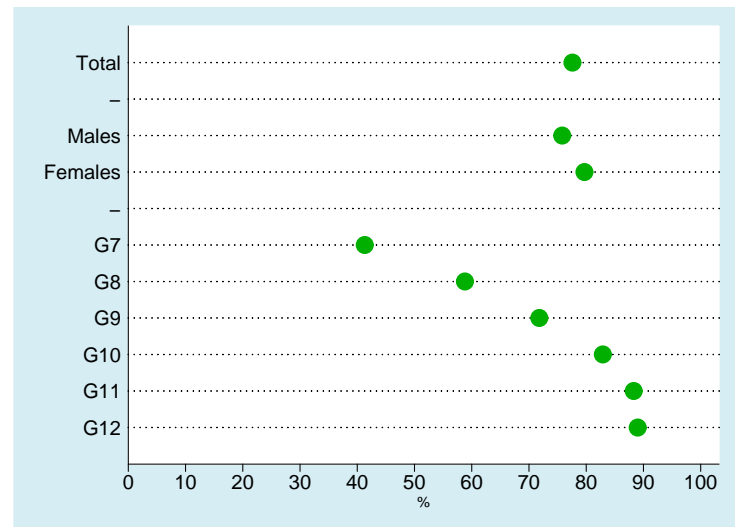


Figure 2 presents beer consumption by sex and grade subgroups. Not surprisingly, male drinkers are more like than female drinkers to drink beer (77% vs. 54%). There is a significant grade effect, with 7th-grade drinkers least likely to report drinking beer (40%), jumping to 64% among 8th-grade drinkers. Beer is most likely to be consumed by 12th-graders (77%).

As seen in Figure 3, a large proportion of male (76%) and female (80%) drinkers consume liquor, and there is no significant sex difference. However, there is significant grade variation in liquor consumption. Seventh-grade drinkers (41%) are least likely to drink liquor, and this increases to about 88% among 11th- and 12th-graders. The large percentage of drinkers reporting usually drinking liquor is likely due to the popularity of coolers (also known as “alcopops” in other countries) among teenagers, especially females.

Finally, it should be noted that only 25% of past year drinkers restrict their drinking to one single type of alcoholic beverage. That is, the majority of students drink two or all three types of beverages.

Methods:

The *Ontario Student Drug Use Survey (OSDUS)* is an Ontario-wide survey of elementary (grades 7 and 8) and secondary (grades 9-12) school students conducted every two years since 1977. The 2005 survey, which used a stratified (region) two-stage cluster design (school, class) included 7,726 students in grades 7 to 12 from 42 school boards, 137 schools, and 445 classes. Self-administered, anonymous questionnaires were distributed and collected by staff from the Institute for Social Research, York University on a classroom basis between January and June 2005. The student participation rate was 72%. The 2005 full sample size of 7,726 students represents about 975,200 students in grades 7 to 12 in public and Catholic schools across the province. The present analysis is based on a random half sample of 2,381 past year drinkers.

All survey estimates were weighted, and variance and statistical tests were corrected for the sampling design.

Terminology:

- **Past Year Drinker** is defined as one who consumed alcohol at least once during the 12 months before the survey, including on special occasions. Excluded are those who just had a sip of alcohol.
- **Wine** consumption was measured with the question “On average, how much wine do you usually drink at any one time?” Response options ranged from “less than 1 glass” to “7 or more glasses”; “don’t drink wine” was also an option.
- **Beer** consumption was measured with the question “On average, how much beer do you usually drink at any one time?” Response options ranged from “less than 1 bottle” to “7 or more bottles”; “don’t drink beer” was also an option.
- **Liquor** consumption was measured with the question “On average, how much hard liquor (for example rum, whiskey, vodka, coolers, etc.) do you usually drink at any one time?” Response options ranged from “less than 1 drink” to “7 or more drinks”; “don’t drink hard liquor” was also an option.
- **95% Confidence Interval (CI)** can be crudely interpreted as being 95% likely to include the “true” value if every student in grades 7 to 12 in Ontario was surveyed.
- **Significant Difference** refers to a difference between two percentages that is not likely due to chance. For example, a difference found at the $p < .05$ level of statistical significance is one that is less than 5% likely to occur by chance alone.

Source:

For more substance use results from the 2005 *OSDUS*, please see:

Adlaf, E.M., & Paglia-Boak, A. (2005). *Drug Use Among Ontario Students, 1977-2005: Detailed OSDUS Findings*. CAMH Research Document Series, No. 16. Toronto: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. (The report is available in PDF format at <http://www.camh.net/research/osdus.html>.)

Suggested Citation:

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. What Are Kids Drinking? *CAMH Population Studies eBulletin*, July/August 2006, Vol. 7, No.4. Toronto, Ontario: CAMH.

To receive future issues of the *eBulletin*, please contact Maureen Kothare via email at: maureen_kothare@camh.net

Media Enquiries: Tel: 416-595-6015